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***From the Office of the Director of Health***

**Special Event Encourages Community to Prepare for Emergencies**

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department and its partners celebrate National Public Health Week with a special presentation for the public on “Pandemic Influenza – The Past, Present and Future of Public Health.”

“Many lessons can be learned about how to better protect ourselves and our community by looking at what has happened in the past,” says director Kevin Gipson. “The 1918 pandemic took more than 500,000 lives, many of them young, healthy adults. We are working now with our partners to prepare for the next pandemic. By planning, exercising and educating the public we hope to reduce the number of lives lost should pandemic influenza strike again.”

The event will be held Wednesday, April 4<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm at Hammons Heart Institute. Presentations will be offered on the history of pandemic influenza and planning efforts currently underway. Attendees will also receive tools to help them develop their own family emergency plan. “Public Health Partner” awards will be presented, and community representatives will be on hand to share information about their role in the public health infrastructure.

“This event compliments the National Public Health Week theme “Preparedness and Public Health” by encouraging individuals to “Take the First Step” in preparing for the next pandemic, and other public health emergencies,” adds Gipson. “Despite 9-11, the 2001 anthrax attacks, SARS, Hurricane Katrina and the looming threat of pandemic influenza, Americans are still largely unprepared for emergencies. In fact, a September 2006 poll by Marist College Institute for Public Opinion noted that only 31% of Americans have emergency plans.”

The event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

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